

## **Tisbury Climate Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** January 24, 2022

**Meeting called to order:** by Melinda Loberg, Chair, at 5:32 PM.

**Place:** Zoom: <https://zoom.us/j/91458380109>  
Meeting ID: 91458380109    Passcode: 348847

**Attendance:** Committee Members: Melinda Loberg, Louise Clough, Anna Edey,  
Keith McGuire, Kate Shands, Bill Straw  
Guests: Margaret Song, Cape Light Compact (CLC)  
Ross Seavey, Tisbury Building Commissioner, Staff liaison to Committee

Melinda began the meeting by reading the Covid disclaimer and the Zoom information.

**Discussion:** Melinda introduced Margaret Song and said we should start with her because her time is limited. Margaret said her title is Commercial and Industrial Program Manager for CLC, and that she focuses on coordination with municipalities. She explained that the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources gives energy plan assistance grants to the CLC to help towns with services such as grant applications and annual reporting. The grant is not always assured; it's a competition; you have to apply for it, but CLC did, and Tisbury is one of the grantees. So, the state instituted a grant to CLC on Tisbury's behalf, and the way the grant works is no money goes from the state to the town; the contract is between CLC and the state, and the money is funneled through CLC as the grant administrator. There is no paperwork for the Town other than a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with CLC, which Jay Grande signed on September 8, 2021.

In response to questions from Melinda, Bill, and Anna, Margaret said she can send us a copy of the MOU. The terms are \$1500 for grant application preparation and \$1500 for annual report preparation. The total value of the grant CLC received from the state is \$75,291.50; it runs from October 1, 2021 through May 31, 2023, and a number of other towns on the Vineyard, the Cape, and Gosnold received funding. This is the second time CLC has received this grant, but there is no guarantee that they will be able to get it again. In Tisbury, Margaret has been helping co-ordinate work with contractors, helping Suzanne Kennedy enter data and helping Jay Grande and Kirk Metell with annual reports. The program is just one slice of the Green Communities (GC) Program. Its specific purpose is to help the town with paperwork, including applying for GC grants, and Bill noted that, given the demands on town personnel, there is no question that we want Margaret on our team. CLC, working with Bill and Kirk, helped the Town apply for an initial designation grant for heat pumps at the DPW, the purchase of a hybrid vehicle, and administrative assistance. Unfortunately, the bids came in too high for the heat

pumps, so that money had to be returned. The Town can apply for that money again for the heat pumps or for other purposes.

Melinda asked if we should do an energy analysis of our town buildings like the one West Tisbury did, and if CLC could help with that. Margaret said CLC can fund standard assessments to look for energy efficiency opportunities like heating, water heating, and lighting in all of the Town buildings. CLC can provide some money for those assessments. On the other side, GC does provide some funding. She said West Tisbury has asked for funds for energy resiliency, but they haven't heard back yet. She added that the Federal Department of Energy (DOE) has opened up applications for a program that will help islanded communities with energy transition planning. It's not a typical grant. They pay a technical assistant to provide services. The application is due April 15, and there will be an information session in February.

*[Note: The Program is called the Energy Transitions Initiative Partnership Project (ETIPP), and information about it can be found on the DOE website @ energy.gov. There are also two other programs under this Project, one called "planning for, withstanding, and recovering from energy disruptions" and a second called "strengthening energy resilience". ]*

Ross introduced himself as the Town liaison to the Committee and responded to Melinda's question about an analysis of the Town's buildings. He said he had preliminary discussions with Jay about where things stand, and that there are several buildings, such as Town Hall and the Annex trailers, that need a complete overhaul and there's no point in looking at them again. There are other older buildings, such as the Senior Center and the DPW, that need maintenance. The school and the library will be doing complete renovations. He said there's not much point in spending money doing assessments of buildings that we already know need a major overhaul.

Bill said that there is no guarantee that GC money will always be there, that it currently amounts to \$250,000 twice a year, and agreed that there's not much point in spending money doing an assessment of our buildings when we already know that the three most important systems we need to address are lighting (just replace all lights with LED's), hybrid hot water heaters, and heat pumps. He said even if we needed to tear them out and re-use them if we did a major overhaul of a building, heat pumps are worth installing. He added that even if we install heat pumps, we keep the fossil fuel systems as back-up in case the electricity goes down. Anna said the most likely thing to happen is a total blackout, and we need to prepare for that possibility. Bill said he agreed with Anna about that, but the funds we are talking about are not for generation; they are only for energy efficiency, so we're back to the three important immediate needs. Ultimately, we'll talk about replacing windows and improving insulation, but for now, we need to focus on those three needs.

Ross asked Margaret if GC money can be used for battery backups for storage and if any of the money can be used for new construction, such as the school. Margaret said the grants could be used for battery storage. She added that there is another program we should know about. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Department of Natural Resources (DOER) have a Gap grant program that will be coming out in the next few

weeks that is only for water and wastewater treatment, but Tisbury has the Water Works. They have grants up to five million dollars that cover energy efficiency and clean energy generation, so this is one grant where you could include solar. Melinda asked if, for example, this would allow for installation of a solar field near the water tanks to run the pumps with a battery storage kind of thing. Margaret said yes, but said you might need to include some additional components, such as some drives, so we would want to do that analysis, but she said they have clarified that it is possible to use Mass. DEP and GC funds on the same project.

Both the Gap grants and the GC grants are coming up, but they have not been announced yet. We want to get engineers out there to look at our buildings and help us assess our needs. True new construction and additions do not qualify, but if you're clearly doing a renovation, that may qualify, so the school and the library might be eligible.

Anna asked who would cover the cost of the engineer, and Margaret replied that CLC would cover the energy efficiency portion of the cost. During the Gap grant funding, the Town would probably need to reach out to a solar installer, but much of that might be able to be done through CVEC.

Anna asked if local contractors could work on these projects, and Margaret replied that it depends on how you set up the procurement; many state organizations have certification and insurance requirements, and we would have to check and see what the requirements are.

Rachel commented that on one grant (heat pumps at the DPW), we had only one bidder, and the original amount increased, so the Town couldn't move forward. Anna said the insurance requirements prohibit many local builders from applying, and it would be a shame for us to have to pay for expensive engineers when we have local people who have the expertise to do the work. Margaret replied that she doesn't control the grants, but many of them do have certification and insurance requirements.

Melinda said our number one goal is to prioritize what the Town can do, and what are the most cost-effective ways to do things. She asked about dates for applications, and Margaret said the GC dates are not out yet. GC requires that previous grants be completed by February, and then Towns can apply by April for the next cycle. Tisbury has completed its past grants. The DOE will have an information session on Feb. 16, and April 15 is the due date for those grant applications. The GAP grant program will announce in a few weeks, and there will be 6-8 weeks to submit grant applications for their programs. Margaret offered to alert someone on the committee when those applications are open. Melinda said it will be important for us to follow this very closely.

Keith joined the meeting at this point.

Melinda then said she wanted to circle back to the school and wondered if we can still offer assistance to that project at this late date. Margaret said Jay had referred her to James Rogers and asked if that's whom she should be working with. She said they had also reached out to Tappe Architects but haven't heard back. Ross said he would let us know whom to communicate with.

Anna commented that the current school design has no climate resiliency whatsoever. Moreover, the cost is not just \$55 million added; with the cost of the loan, we will actually pay close to \$80 million dollars or more; some costs, such as the trailers, have doubled already. Melinda said we need to know who the liaison is before we can move forward.

Bill asked if GC funding was still done twice a year and asked about drop-dead dates to obtain funding. Margaret said early April is the likely date, and this is a good time to review projects and buildings. Bill asked if we wanted to do a review of the lighting in all 11 buildings, how would we go about that? Margaret said as long as people know they're coming, CLC would be happy to do the review. All they need is an invitation and it could be by e-mail, phone or text. Bill said we just have to do something because every time we miss a deadline, we leave \$250,000 on the table. Ross asked about the timeline, and Margaret said that with the pandemic, the State has been more unpredictable than normal, but normally if we apply in April, we will probably find out within a month or two. Lately, it's been more like 6 or 7 months, so it would probably be about six months before we hear, and the contract period is usually 18 months.

Kate asked if engineers were coming out to look at lighting, could they look at heat pumps and the hot water situation at the same time? Margaret said absolutely; they would want to send out a versatile engineer.

Melinda asked if the school project were looking for heat pumps, what could GC do for that project? Margaret said typically the grants go up to \$200,000 per year, but there's a new thing they started last year called custom projects; she doesn't know if they'll do it again, but if they did, they would offer implementation projects up to \$500,000. That does require a 10% match, but that might happen anyway with the Town's efforts with the school. She added that if you get one of these grants, you are ineligible to apply for competitive grants for two years. If you apply for \$25,000 grants for engineering or design services, the two-year limit does not apply. Margaret offered to send out the 2021 grant guidance so we could see what has been done before. She said she could also send out the Gap grant information and the DOE islanded communities information as well.

Ross asked if it would be better to look at funding for the school or to look at smaller projects that could be done quickly. Melinda said she got lists from Kirk and Bill about what the Town has done, and she can send those to Ross.

Melinda thanked Margaret and said we would be back in touch through Bill. Margaret reiterated that she will send out those resources and said it's a great thing that the Committee is engaged and moving forward.

**Review and Approval of Minutes:** Louise moved that the minutes be accepted, Anna seconded, and the motion passed 6-0.

Anna asked for the recordings for our meetings, and Melinda said she could probably find links to the meetings from the last 30 days and share them with the Committee.

**Steering Committee Report:** Keith reported that the Steering Committee met Jan. 14 for the Climate Action Plan (CAP). They are doing things month by month with the Thematic Working Groups, leading up to a big meeting in May. They are going to come up with some general goals and strategies for the CAP. The next key thing the CAP Team is looking for is input from the towns (both officials and citizens) in March to try to refine and improve those goals and strategies. They want us to let them know how to organize that effort in Tisbury. Should we have one big meeting with representatives from all those sectors or a series of public meetings?

Louise asked, if we were to have a meeting with one representative from all those sectors, who would run it? Keith said the CAP group would be willing to help us with that, and Liz Durkee would be happy to come back to one of our meetings to discuss it. Melinda said the Town has a bit of a precedent for that from when the Planning Board set up some public vision forums, so we already have a skeletal structure for that. Anna said she has proposals she would like to share, and Keith said he could take some of those proposals back to the Steering Committee, including the slide presentation that Anna shared with us.

Melinda said we were running out of time and needed to get back to our list of priorities. Anna said she wanted to address one item on that list. She said we don't need special charging stations, because everybody has, in essence, a charging station in their own home. Keith disagreed, saying it would be helpful to have a charging station when one has only limited mileage on a charge from home, and that we have visitors who would need public ones.

Melinda went back to the priority list that she and Bill had prepared and asked for feedback from the group on those priorities. Bill said he wanted to add two items to the list: preparation for a Category 5 hurricane and understanding the Steamship Authority's emergency plan. He added that he knows that the SSA has something of a plan: in case of a major storm prediction, they move all of their boats to New Bedford, behind the sea wall, which would leave us stranded except for the airport. He said we need to understand more about their plan. Melinda said she had reached out to Christina Colarusso concerning the Town's emergency plan, but apparently Christina is no longer our emergency planner, so we need to reach out to Greg Leland [Fire Chief], who now holds that position. She suggested that we could have him come to one of our meetings. Bill commented that Greg now has two jobs, and that doesn't give credit to what an emergency manager position involves. Melinda said she thinks we need to write a letter to Jay Grande and the Select Board listing some of our thoughts and recommendations.

Anna wondered if anyone is thinking about a nationwide long-term blackout for as long as six months or more and what we should do to prepare for that; she asked if people are aware of how frail the national grid is and how vulnerable it is to coordinated terrorism. Melinda said that's a good question, one to ask our emergency manager when they come to one of our meetings. She added that they have been working on emergency plans and coordinating the

with MEMA and FEMA, and we need to find out what they have so far. Anna disagreed, saying we already know what will happen; it would be total chaos; there won't be any FEMA; everything will collapse. This is what we have to prepare for if we want to survive. Keith said we agree with Anna, and this is what we're here for. We can make preparation for six months without electricity one of our goals. Anna said she would communicate with Keith about her goals.

Melinda went back to the priority list and said Bill had mentioned sharing our top ten priorities from this list or ones that are not included. She said it's a working document and we need to refine it.

Melinda then asked if anybody had anything else to discuss, and Keith said he had sent some information about a guy named Jeffrey DuBard and a loan program for green energy changes called PACE [Property Assessed Clean Energy Program from the US Department of Energy]; Mr. DuBard would like to come and talk to us about that program. Melinda said she had heard his presentation to the West Tisbury Select Board, and it wasn't well received; she would suggest that we attend when they present to the Tisbury Select Board. Anna said she's concerned about their high interest rate, and we can do better than that.

Melinda then brought up the timing of meetings and when our next meeting should be. She said there had been a suggestion that we meet every three weeks, but we need to be on track for the calendar of the Town meeting and the Town budgeting; identifying a project and grant opportunities that Margaret may be able to help us with; and responding to the Steering Committee's request to figure out how to engage the community, perhaps on the vision plan model. The group agreed we should meet again in two weeks.

**Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn by Louise, seconded by Bill. The motion passed 6-0. The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 PM.

**Next Meeting:** Monday, Feb. 7 at 5:30 PM.

**Minutes Submitted by:** Kate Shands